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ON THE COVER
The Tony-winning classic *Les Miserables* is one of many Broadway stalwarts hitting the stage in the Twin Cities this season.
Photo by Matthew Murphy

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Editorial
Managing Editor Chris Tarbox 612-436-4692
Editorial Assistants Linda Raines 612-436-4660, Kassidy Tarala
Editor Emeritus Ethan Boatner
Editorial Associate George Holdgrafer
Contributors Ellen Krug, Steve Lenius, Jennifer Parello, Randy Stern, John Townsend, Bradley Traynor, Carla Waldemar

Advertising
Sales & Advertising Director Barry Leavitt 612-436-4690
Senior Account Executive Suzanne Farrell 612-436-4699
Account Executives
Josh Elmore 612-436-4697
Nathan Johnson 612-436-4695
Richard Kranz 612-436-4675
Advertising Associate: George Holdgrafer
Sales & Event Administration:
Linda Raines 612-436-4660
Classifieds Suzanne Farrell 612-436-4699
National Sales Representatives
Motivate Media 858-272-9023
NEMA 612-436-4698
Rivendell Media 212-242-6863

Creative
Digital Director Mike Hnida 612-436-4679
Photographer Sophia Hantzes
Lavender Studios Mike Hnida

Administration
Publisher Lavender Media, Inc.
President & CEO Stephen Rocheford 612-436-4665
Vice President & CC Pierre Tardif 612-436-4666
Chief Financial Officer Mary Lauer 612-436-4664
Distribution Manager/Administrative Assistant Casey Ubel 612-436-4660
Founders George Holdgrafer, Stephen Rocheford
Inspiration Steven W. Anderson (1954-1994), Timothy J. Lee (1968-2002), Russell Berg (1957-2005), Kathryn Rocheford (1914-2006), Jonathan Halverson (1974-2010), Adam Houghtaling (1984-2012), Walker Pearce (1946-2013), Tim Campbell (1939-2015), Donald Tardif (1942-2018)

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QUORUM SECTION

FROM THE EDITOR | BY CHRIS TARBOX

Who Lives, Who Dies, Who Tells Your Story

As we prepare for the summer heat to subside and for the unmistakable chill of the fall and winter seasons to embrace us, we can take consolation in the fact that Broadway season is upon us! Well, not just Broadway, obviously, but a whole slew of amazing productions that will take the Twin Cities by storm. And *Lavender* is thrilled to present our Fall Arts and Dining issue for 2018!

Within these pages is a comprehensive guide to the plays, musicals, and performances coming to the Twin Cities during the fall and winter months, along with suggestions for restaurants near certain venues to make your dinner-and-a-show experiences complete.

On top of that, we learn about the spicy offerings of the upcoming HUMP! Film Festival coming to Minneapolis in September, we get to know about the annual Golden Valley Arts and Music Festival celebrating its 15th year, and yours truly experiences the brand-new Alamo Drafthouse Cinema in Woodbury (SPOILER ALERT: don't talk during the movie. You're gonna have a bad time.)

So dust off your finest suits and dresses, set up your reservations (I am shaking with anticipation for my showing of *Hamilton*, I cannot wait), and get ready to enjoy the glitz and glamour of the stage! ■

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A WORD IN EDGEWISE | BY E.B. BOATNER

Good Neighbor Fred

I was much older than the target audience for the TV show which, after a start in 1963 and some re-brandings, made its U.S. debut February 19, 1968 as *Mr. Rogers' Neighborhood.* Most of the bits and pieces I picked up about the program were jokey and Mr. Rogers himself seemed a bit, well, creepy, with his soft drawl, his colorful cardigans, those sneakers.

Though "suitable for all ages", the show was aimed at the 2-5 set, and it is only now, as I've read more about the man, and recently went to experience the documentary film, *Won't You Be My Neighbor?* (it caused me to tear up more than once) that Fred Rogers knew exactly what he was about.

I assumed all kiddy shows were either saccharine and condescending, or loud and frenetic. *Neighborhood* was neither. In the darkened theater, I felt chills as a puppet character asked, "What does the word 'assassination' mean?" relating to the 1968 killing of Robert Kennedy. Rogers engaged a spectrum of actual childhood concerns; anger, fear, the death of a pet, always carefully maintaining a clear distinction between the realism of his Neighborhood and the world of Make-Believe, where King Friday XIII reigned and puppets talked.

Facing funding cuts for public television in 1969, the mild but inexorable Rogers donned suit and tie and went before a Senate Subcommittee on Communication. Using the same direct tone he used with children, he explained, in part, "I feel that if we in public television can only make it clear that feelings are mentionable and manageable, we will have done a great service for mental health." He recited one of his songs, "What do you do with the mad that you feel?"

Subcommittee chairman Senator John O. Pastore, self-styled "pretty tough guy," responded much like Fred Rogers' small viewers: "…This is the first time I've had goosebumps for the last two days. Looks like you just earned the $20 million."

Fred Rogers had what it takes to be a "real Man"–or "real Woman," or "real Person"; courage, compassion, frankness, humor. "One of the greatest gifts you can give anybody is the gift of your honest self," he stated. "I also believe that kids can spot a phony a mile away." ■

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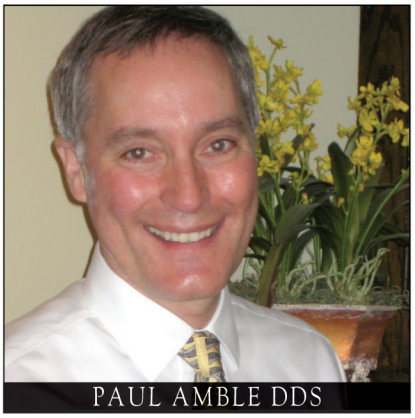

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MN GAY FLAG FOOTBALL LEAGUE WEEK ONE

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A DAY in the Life

BY CHRIS TARBOX

JIM HALVORSON

Name: Jim Halvorson

Where did you grow up? I grew up out in the country showing horses and cows in Buffalo, MN.

Where do you live? I just bought my first home in Northeast Minneapolis! I'm finally "home" and love NE!

Who do you live with? I have a granny-cat, Inga, that I've had for 15 years, and I also have a roommate, Michael Parady; he and I have been roommates for eight years.

What is your occupation? I am a hairstylist and makeup artist and co-own the salon I work at, CaJah Salon in St. Paul.

When did you come out? I was 18 years old.

How'd that go? Coming out went okay; my mom asked me if I was gay before I came out, then two weeks later I did it, knowing full well she already knew. Then she told my dad and we had dinner and I told him too. A little rough patch here and there, but eventually everything went fine! I'm lucky to have two loving and super supportive parents.

When do you wake up? Usually in the 6 a.m. hour at some time. I have already gotten my clothes prepared for the day because I get up and go work out 2-3 times a week for my mental/physical health since I'm always at my salon. Plus, we are currently expanding our salon, so a lot of time is being spent there now that I need to work out for my own sanity! Being gay doesn't define me, it enhances me!

Phone alarm or old school alarm? Phone alarm, or else my cat is up snuggling me and purring in my face because she's hungry!

What's the first thing you do in the morning? Snuggle with inga, then go feed her cause she's screaming at me cause she's starving, like every cat on the face of the Earth.

Breakfast? Usually breakfast is a banana and pre-workout shake before I go to the gym. If I don't work out, I'll usually fry an egg and make an egg sandwich and eat it on the way to work.

Coffee? "Coffee" yes, but I don't wanna taste the coffee… usually like a salted caramel mocha. Something super sugary and non-coffee tasting.

Cream or no? Yes, whipped cream!

How do you spend your commute: I only have a 15 minute drive to my salon, so I flip through Sirius channels, usually CNN news updates, or the BPM channel to get me going in the morning.

If your job were like a yearbook, what would you be voted? (Class clown, best dressed, most annoying, etc.) I would say "Most Cheerful" and "Mr. Smiley".

What inspires you? My business partner Carrie inspires me. She raised two amazing children on her own, working full time and all the while being a 14-year breast cancer suvivor. She eats and lives healthy and doesn't judge anyone or anything. She lives life to the fullest, and she is my rock in life too!

Do you eat your lunch while working or take a break? My daily work schedule runs on 45 minute increments. All my haircuts/colors/highlights all book at 45 minute spots through my day, so yes, I take one 45 minute break midday usually around 2:15 p.m. My work day is 10:30 a.m.-8:15 p.m. daily!

Is your work space tidy or a hot mess? Tidy, everything has its place, it's all faced forward but very organized because it helps with the flow of each client if everything is in its right place.

What's been your favorite job? My current job, being a full-time hairstylist, makeup artist and also salon owner. We have an amazing team of 12 stylists working together, soon to be 18! We are looking to hire six more stylists to join us to "play hair" at our salon, and love what we do!

Who are your heroes? I guess I don't really have any personal heroes, it's tough for me to look at someone and say I want to be like them. Really, my heroes are everyday people who do nice things for others without the need for anything in return.

Favorite weeknight meal: Go out, take out, or cook in? I love going out to eat. I think my favorite meal is going out for sushi. Ordering a whole bunch of different fish, but also having robata, "meat on a stick" while having a Sapporo beer!

Most embarrassing moment: My most embarrassing moment was hilarious. I was at CaJah Salon cutting hair one day and I was wearing a nice light pair of linen pants during the summer. I bent down to grab something off the floor and RRRRIIIIIPPPPP goes the seam right up the back of my pants! It was dead silent in the salon and everyone looked over at me and we all started laughing our heads off. I went next door to the clothing store and bought a pair of womens capri jeans and wore them the rest of the day! It is still talked about to this day!

On a usual weeknight, you are doing what? I am at the salon booked with clients until 8:15/8:30 p.m. every night. After that, I head home to make food and eat and watch some Netflix and hopefully go to sleep by midnight, so I can get up at 6ish and head to the gym!

Bedtime: Midnight for sure.

Favorite weekend activity: I love going out to rollerblade around the lakes in the summer, or else grab my hammock and tiny grill and go find to shady trees near Lake of the Isles or Calhoun and sit and relax and read a book or watch Netflix, grill some hotdogs and just try to chill. During the winter, I love going to the movies on the weekend.

What are you most proud of and why? This answer is going to sound odd, but I am most proud of myself… and I think everyone should be proud of themselves everyday as well. I was a gymnast growing up, I was a cheerleader, I showed horses, and now I'm a full-time hair stylist and a salon owner and I've worked so hard to get where I'm at in life. Everyone should feel proud of themselves, especially people growing up as LGBT and having to have inner struggles. Just to be yourself in life!

Words of wisdom to share: Be true to yourself and stay strong. Put your best face forward and treat others as you hope to be treated. ■

Photo by Mike Hnida

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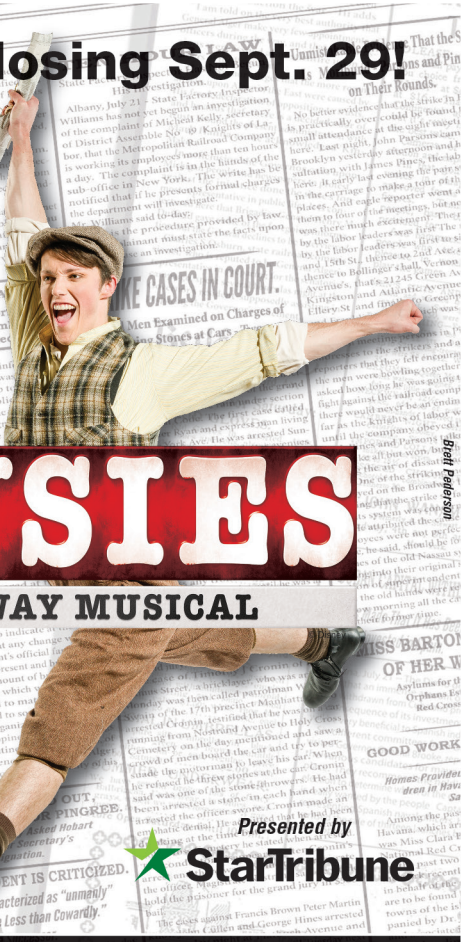

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Hamilton.
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Once.
Photo by Allen Weeks

ONCE

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2018 FALL ARTS & DINING PAIRINGS

THE MIRACLE WORKER

Yellow Tree Theatre
at Yellow Tree Theatre
Sept. 14-Oct. 14, 2018

William Gibson's 1959 drama is a landmark of the American stage. The true story of deafblind Helen Keller. She surmounts gigantic obstacles, inner and outer, with help from her "tough love" teacher, Annie Sullivan. It was actually Mark Twain who described Sullivan as "a miracle worker".

yellowtreetheatre.com

SOMETIMES THERE'S WINE

Park Square Theatre
at Andy Boss Thrust Stage,
Park Square Theatre
Sept. 14-Oct. 14, 2018

Shanan Custer and Carolyn Pool tell comedic stories about the curveballs life throws, not the least of which can fly your way via text messaging. Wine is a catalyst for observations to flow, joyfully and nostalgically. Two fine local actresses with impressive track records.

parksquaretheatre.org

WEST OF CENTRAL

Pillsbury House Theatre
at Pillsbury House + Theatre
Sept. 14-Oct. 14, 2018

Christina Ham is the gifted playwright of *Crash Test Dummies* and *Nina Simone: Four Women*. In *West of Central,* in the aftershocks of the Watts riots in Los Angeles soon after the passage of the Voting Rights Act, a female detective investigates a treacherous case.

pillsburyhouseandtheatre.org

AWAKE AND SING!

Artistry at Bloomington Theatre
and Art Center
at Black Box Theatre
Sept. 15–Oct. 7, 2018

Clifford Odets was a major 20th century American playwright who shaped social dramas reflecting the strains and struggle of common men and women. In *Awake and Sing!,* three generations in a small apartment wrestle with The Great Depression. First produced by The Group Theatre collective in 1935.

artistrymn.org

LAST STOP ON MARKET STREET

Children's Theatre Company
at Children's Theatre Company
Sept. 15-Oct. 12, 2018

Playwright Cheryl West is known for her concerns about children, so this co-commissioned play between CTC and Chicago Children's Theatre is a sure bet. A six-year-old boy rides the bus with his flamboyant grandmother, discovering a world *not* totally hooked on technology.

www.childrenstheatre.org

Beautiful- The Carole King Musical.
Photo by Matthew Murphy

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Here's to Going Out Right

2018 FALL ARTS & DINING PAIRINGS

Les Miserables.
Photo by Matthew Murphy

LITTLE WOMEN

The Jungle Theater
at The Jungle Theater
Sept. 15-Oct. 21, 2018

Kate Hamill's stage adaptation of Louisa May Alcott's classic transports us back to the Civil War era. The March sisters reflect fundamental young women's experiences of the time, from scarlet fever to work as a governess. Director Sarah Rasmussen's historical golden touch is ideal for this production.
www.jungletheater.com

RESTAURANT PAIRING: MUDDY WATERS BAR & EATERY

While there are plenty of pre-show nosh options in walking distance of The Jungle Theater, you won't find a better steak, burger or flatbread nearby than the ones on offer at Muddy Waters. I routinely think about the melt-in-your-mouth, amazing butcher's steak, as well as the crispy, dense yucca fries.

FRANKENSTEIN – PLAYING WITH FIRE

Guthrie Theater
at Wurtele Thrust Stage, Guthrie Theater
Sept. 15–Oct. 27, 2018

Inspired by a cautionary tale that still astounds to celebrate the 200th anniversary of one of modern fiction's greatest works, Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein.* And oh the imagination it has sparked since then! Playwright Barbara Field imagines its characters going to the Arctic Circle!
www.guthrietheater.org

RESTAURANT PAIRING: ZEN BOX IZAKAYA

My favorite pre-Guthrie gathering spot, Zen Box is perfect for the adventurous and comfort food crowd alike. Whether you're familiar with Japanese bar food or not, prepare for a real treat. Crispy fried chicken, handmade ramen and melt-in-your-mouth pork belly are among my personal favorites. And don't miss the full range of clever cocktails and sake either.

FOR COLORED GIRLS

Penumbra Theatre Company
at Penumbra Theatre
Sept. 20-30, 2018

Ntozake Shange's 1974 lamentation of black female anguish, called a "choreopoem", was a theatrical groundbreaker for its lyrical stage movement and stream-of-consciousness storytelling. A bleak look at despair born of marginalization. A cornerstone of both African-American and feminist drama.
penumbratheatre.org

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2018 FALL ARTS & DINING PAIRINGS

A Little Night Music.
Photo by Allen Weeks

IS GOD IS

Mixed Blood Theatre
at Mixed Blood Theatre
Sept. 21-Oct. 14, 2018

Two African-American twin sisters who grew up in foster homes were extremely scarred from a fire they believe was set by their father. When called upon by their mother, whom they actually thought had died in the same fire, they're tasked to enact vengeance. Mind-bending!

mixedblood.com

RESTAURANT PAIRING: HODGES BEND

I've been waiting for a reason to include this little taste of Tulsa just off the Green Line in St. Paul in an arts pairing list. It's a veritable choose-your-own-adventure of thoughtful food and drink. Whether you're looking for a laidback happy hour with clever craft cocktails or a single cup of high-end coffee to sip over a good book, you're in luck. Hodges Bend offers up an array of eating and drinking possibilities. And don't leave without trying the crab cake. One of the best I've had in the Twin Cities.

THE AGITATORS

Park Square Theatre
at Proscenium Stage, Park Square Theatre
Sept. 21-Oct. 28, 2018

Susan B. Anthony—foremost figure of women's suffrage. Frederick Douglass, a former slave—the quintessential civll rights leader. Emily Gunyou Halaas and Mikell Sapp portray their tempestuous 45-year-friendship in Mat Smart's play. A regional premiere directed by Signe V. Harriday.

parksquaretheatre.org

DISNEY'S NEWSIES

Chanhassen Dinner Theatres
at Chanhassen Dinner Theatre
Through Sept. 29, 2018

Extra! Extra! Read all about it! Exploited boys called "newsies" hawked the newspapers on New York streets but dared to rebel against newspaper magnate Joseph Pulitzer. A great production. Script by master gay playwright, Harvey Fierstein.

www.chanhassendt.com

TWO DEGREES

Guthrie Theater
at Dowling Studio, Guthrie Theater
Oct. 5-21, 2018

A scientist comes to Washington, D.C., where she finds the place operates on terms of money vs. integrity in a play by Tira Palmquist. The Guthrie's Level 9 Series often presents local talent. From Prime Productions, dedicated to artistry by older women.

www.guthrietheatre.org

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2018 FALL ARTS & DINING PAIRINGS

MARY POPPINS

Artistry at Bloomington Theatre and Art Center
at The Schneider Theater
Oct. 5–Nov. 4, 2018

The 1964 Disney classic is lighter fare than the 2005 stage musical. Still the same basic story with Sherman Brothers music, but the crisis of a family's potential breakdown is sharper. A splendid script by Julian Fellowes (*Downton Abbey, Gosford Park*).

artistrymn.org

IRVING BERLIN'S HOLIDAY INN

Chanhassen Dinner Theatres
at Chanhassen Dinner Theatre
Oct. 5, 2018–Feb. 23, 2019

Relish gorgeously nostalgic tunes by Irving Berlin such as *Blue Skies, White Christmas* and *Cheek to Cheek*. Originated at Connecticut's Goodspeed Opera House, four years ago. Two years later it hit Broadway. And two years later the joyous Holiday Inn plays Chanhassen!

www.chanhassendt.com

RESTAURANT PAIRING: CHANHASSEN DINNER THEATRE

Perhaps the easiest pairing on the list for obvious reasons, Chanhassen Dinner Theatre takes dinner and a show to a whole new level. Literally. Every time I sit down to enjoy a meal at this classic Twin Cities theater venue, I'm immediately reminded how the food matches the magic happening on stage. Don't miss the Chicken Chanhassen.

LA RONDINE

Minnesota Opera
at Ordway Center for the Performing Arts
Oct. 6-14, 2018

Sometimes it seems like we're separated from romance and true love because of income and our station in life. In Puccini's opera, an upper-class woman and a poet face that deeply frustrating issue. From the composer of *Madame Butterfly* and *La Bohème.*

mnopera.org

RESTAURANT PAIRING: MERITAGE

A romantic opera sings out for an equally romantic meal and Meritage has been a couples night favorite years. In fact, my partner and I had one of our best date night meals here. Ever. It's as much a treat for the senses as the show you'll head down the street to indulge. If the chilled lobster is still on the menu, do yourself (and your relationship) a favor and order it.

Wait Until Dark.
Photo by Bob Suh

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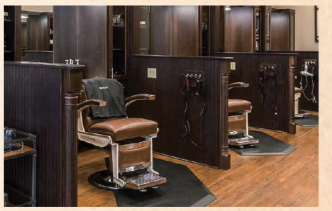

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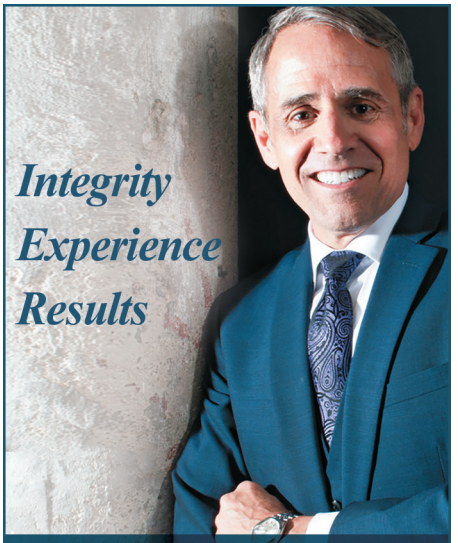

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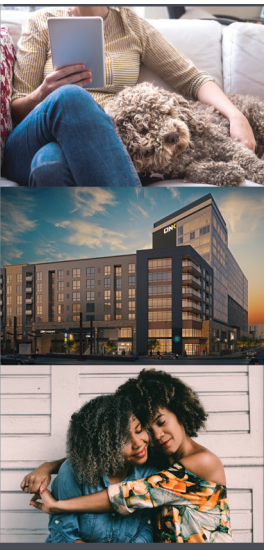

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2018 FALL ARTS & DINING PAIRINGS

A Bronx Tale.
Photo by Joan Marcus

I COME FROM ARIZONA

Children's Theatre Company
at Children's Theatre Company
Oct. 9–Nov. 25, 2018

A 14-year-old girl learns secrets about her own immediate family history through a class on global perspectives. The setting is Chicago but her past links back to Mexico. *I Come From Arizona* muses on the idea that we inherit strength particular to our own lineage.
www.childrenstheatre.org

RESTAURANT PAIRING: LITTLE TIJUANA

With all the amazing food along Eat Street, you might find it peculiar that I picked this quirky little Tex Mex hole-in-the-wall for a pre-show nibble. Fear not, I'm about to change your life. Seriously. In addition to the obvious comfort classics like tacos and enchiladas, Little T's has one of the best burgers in town. I'm not joking. I consider it the best kept burger secrets of the Twin Cities. There's something magical about their flame-rollicking charbroiler.

GRAND OPENING

Theatre in the Round Players
at Theatre in the Round
Oct. 12-Nov. 4, 2018

Said to be the closest thing to autobiography from beloved Minnesota author Jon Hassler. In 1945, a 12-year-old boy leaves Minneapolis with his parents to start a business outstate. Here the family discovers that small towns have their vibrancy, but also their shadow.
www.theatreintheround.org

TROYE SIVAN – THE BLOOM TOUR

Hennepin Theatre Trust
at State Theatre
Oct. 17, 2018

Aussie Troye Sivan, a truly remarkable young talent, has a fervent following for GLBT-themed videos that emanate visual beauty and for unabashedly romantic tunes like *My, My, My!* and *Animal*. You'll hear work from his new album, *Bloom*, dedicated to boyfriend, Jacob Bixenman.
hennepintheatretrust.org

BEAUTIFUL – THE CAROL KING MUSICAL

Hennepin Theatre Trust
at Orpheum Theatre
Oct. 22-27, 2018

Brooklyn teenager Carol Klein transformed into the superstar we know as Carol King. Her *Tapestry* album with the tunes *I Feel the Earth Move* and *It's Too Late*, is quintessential '70s. And *Beautiful* is one of the best formulaic jukebox musicals ever conceived.
hennepintheatretrust.org

KATHY GRIFFIN – LAUGH YOUR HEAD OFF WORLD TOUR

Hennepin Theatre Trust
at State Theatre
Oct. 25, 2018

Recently infamous for appearing in a certain photo shoot with a certain fake head, Kathy Griffin has earned political praise and ire as a result. But fortunately we have free speech and expression in the U.S.A. and controversy can translate into sold out performances!
hennepintheatretrust.org

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NOISES OFF

Guthrie Theater
at McGuire Proscenium Stage, Guthrie Theater
Oct. 27–Dec. 16, 2018

The 1982 slapstick "play within a play" about a staging of a sex farce is among the most challenging plays ever. The actors must impeccably act out cascades of mistakes and screw-ups made by the actors in that sex farce. An Ultimate Paradox!

www.guthrietheater.org

ALL IS CALM: THE CHRISTMAS TRUCE OF 1914

Theater Latté Da
at The Ritz Theater
Nov. 1-4, 2018

The World War I Christmas Truce of 1914 was an event where soldiers on both sides laid down their arms in order to celebrate the birth of the Prince of Peace. Theater Latté Da's creation has become a beloved holiday tradition.

www.latteda.org

RANDY RAINBOW

Hennepin Theatre Trust
at Pantages Theatre
Nov. 3, 2018

He has written for Kathy Griffin and has vilified a certain head of state. Now you can see him live! Exalting in irreverence with parodies of classic musical theater numbers and mockery of politicians, Rainbow prompted sex columnist Dan Savage to call him "the best thing about the GOP race."

hennepintheatretrust.org

THE CLEAN HOUSE

Theatre Unbound
at Gremlin Theatre, St. Paul
Nov. 3-18, 2018

Sarah Ruhl rules. A sparkling work by one of America's great playwrights. Packed with her always humorous characters, led by a cleaner who doesn't like cleaning! Maybe you know her other comedic gems: *Dead Man's Cell Phone* and *In the Next Room, or The Vibrator Play.*

www.theatreunbound.com

HOT FUNKY BUTT JAZZ!

Guthrie Theater
at Dowling Studio, Guthrie Theater
Nov. 3-18, 2018

The region's premiere theater featuring artistry of persons with disabilities has a

The Book of Mormon.
Photo by Julieta Cervantes
2017

notable record of creating wonderful collaborations. Accomplished composer-lyricist Aaron Gabriel merges his talents with New Orleans' musicians Zena Moses, Jeremy Phipps and Eugene Harding.
www.guthrietheater.org

THE BOOK OF MORMON

Hennepin Theatre Trust
at Orpheum Theatre
Nov 6 – 18, 2018

A big musical that mirrors the outlook of *South Park*? No wonder! It was created by Trey Parker and Matt Stone and partner, Robert Lopez—a core co-creator of the irreverent *Avenue Q*. A tunefully snarky jab at the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints.
hennepintheatretrust.org

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2018 FALL ARTS & DINING PAIRINGS

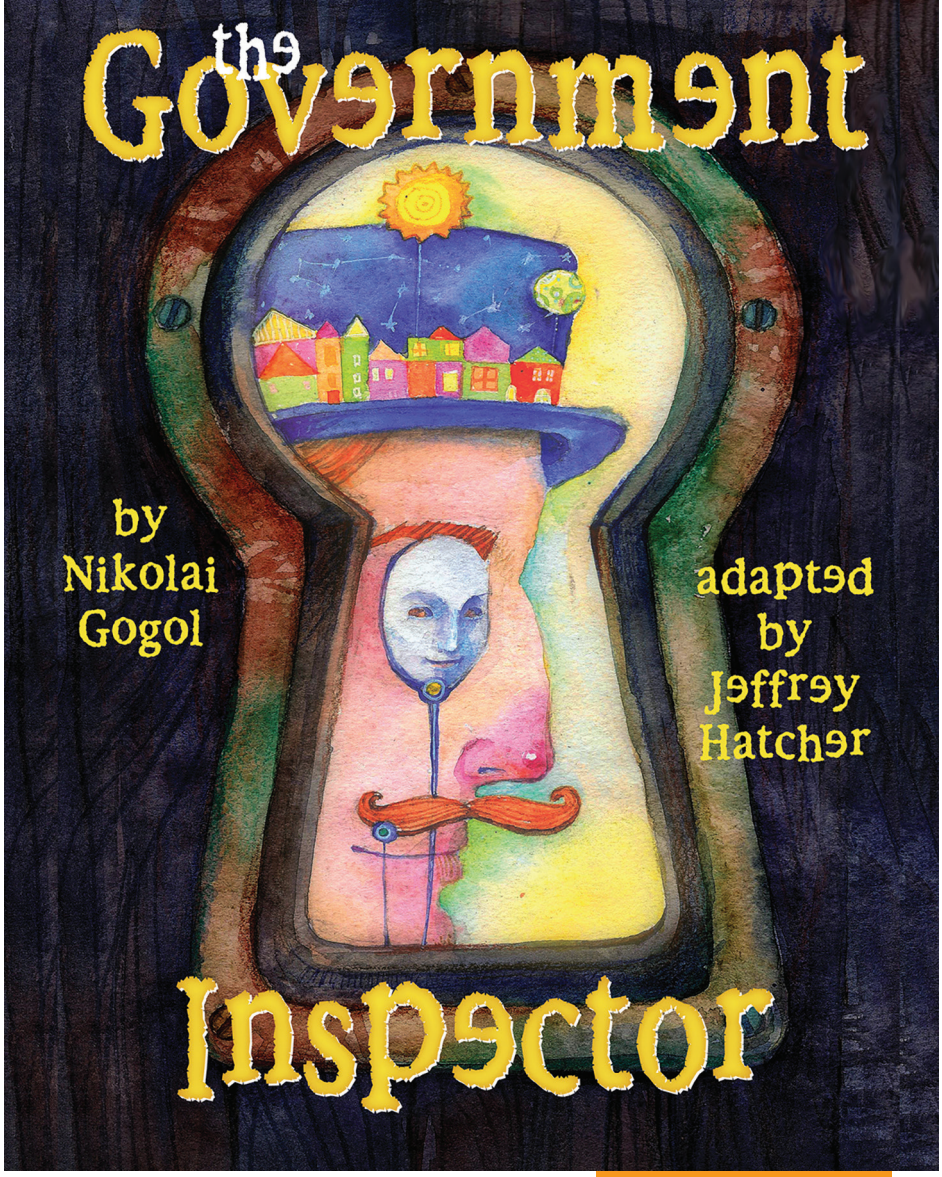
THE GREAT GATSBY
COLLIDE Theatrical Dance Company
at The Ritz Theater
Nov. 8-18, 2018
The Roaring '20s and its craven conspicuous consumption is immortalized in F. Scott Fitzgerald's classic novel. Against this backdrop emerges illicit romance between a mysterious man of wealth and a married woman. Gatsby's flapper dynamics are ideal for a dance treatment.
www.collidetheatrical.org

MIRACLE ON CHRISTMAS LAKE
Yellow Tree Theatre
at Yellow Tree Theatre
Nov. 9-Dec. 30, 2018
Did you know that there's a top-notch place for great play productions in an Osseo strip mall? If you want to be guaranteed a humorously uplifting Christmas show in the western suburbs, check it out. Better yet, their comedy track record is excellent.
yellowtreetheatre.com

SILENT NIGHT
Minnesota Opera
at Ordway Center for the Performing Arts
Nov. 10-18, 2018
You can actually go to the very space performed by the original producing company to see the Pulitzer Prize-winning opera. It takes us back to the Christmas Truce of 1914 when World War I briefly ceased fire to celebrate peace on earth, good will toward men.
mnopera.org

A CHRISTMAS CAROL
Guthrie Theater
at Wurtele Thrust Stage, Guthrie Theater
Nov. 13-Dec. 29, 2018
For over forty years, the Guthrie has beamed forth Charles Dickens's jolting message of the spiritual wages of greed vs. the meager wages of exploited workers. When miserly Scrooge goes too far, phantoms come forth to expose his roaring lack of fairness and generosity.
www.guthrietheater.org

GO BACK FOR MURDER
Theatre in the Round Players
at Theatre in the Round
Nov. 16-Dec. 16, 2018
A woman wonders if her mother was wrongly convicted of murdering her father. 15 years later, the mother has died in prison but the daughter seeks to still clear her name. Agatha Christie is the best-selling mystery writer ever, and her well crafted plays are phenomenally popular.
www.theatreintheround.org



The Government Inspector. Image courtesy of Theatre in the Round

PRESCIENT HARBINGERS
Mixed Blood Theatre
at Mixed Blood Theatre
Nov. 17-Dec. 2, 2018
Three plays look at life from various African American male perspectives: *Gloria*, *Hooded: or Being Black for Dummies*, and *Hype Man*. Within these selections you'll hear commentary on the Second Amendment. Mixed Blood is a longstanding producer of plays dealing with racial prejudice.
mixedblood.com

MARIE AND ROSETTA
Park Square Theatre
at Proscenium Stage, Park Square Theatre
Nov. 23-Dec. 30, 2018
Sister Rosetta Tharpe (1915-1973), known as "The Godmother of Rock and Roll" was a marvelous guitar player who ranks as a major figure in the rich African-American tradition of gospel music. She mentored and collaborated with gospel singer Marie Knight.
parksquaretheatre.org

BLACK NATIVITY
Penumbra Theatre Company
at Penumbra Theatre
Nov. 29-Dec. 9, 2018
A major theater focused on African-American perspectives, the Penumbra Theatre, has tenaciously held to the Christmas tradition with what continues to be one of the entire region's great holiday traditions. And that's across the racial spectrum. Music direction by Sanford Moore.
penumbratheatre.org

RESTAURANT PAIRING: REVIVAL (ST. PAUL)
Not too far from Penumbra, Revival is one of my all-time favorite St. Paul dinner spots. Offering up some of the best ribs, brisket and southern fried chicken in the state, you'd be hard-pressed to find a better pre-show meal. Do yourself a favor and go crazy with sides, especially grits, mac and cheese, and slaw. And hope you get there before the ribs sell out.

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2018 FALL ARTS & DINING PAIRINGS

THE WICKHAMS: CHRISTMAS AT PEMBERLEY

The Jungle Theater
at The Jungle Theater
Dec. 1-30, 2018

Make a second holiday trip to the world of Jane Austen to play on the Jungle stage for the second consecutive year. This year it's *The Wickhams: Christmas at Pemberly*, the companion piece to last year's Austenian *Miss Bennet*. Inspired by the novel, *Pride and Prejudice.*

www.jungletheater.com

ELF THE MUSICAL

Ordway
at Ordway Center for the Performing Arts
Dec. 5-30, 2018

The musical adapted from the Will Ferrell movie seems to stealthily be making its way to "tradition" status. When an orphan crawls into Santa's bag of gifts he is whisked away. But when he reaches the North Pole the boy's enormous size presents some problems.

ordway.org

RESTAURANT PAIRING: HANDSOME HOG

While *Elf* helps you remember the true meaning of Christmas, Handsome Hog will help you remember the true meaning of pork. This temple of contemporary southern cookery in St. Paul pays delicious, unctuous homage to the pig and all its permutations. And so much more. The pimento cheese dip will literally change your life. As will whole roasted hog jowl. Hog jowl, really? Yes, really. Think the best pork belly you've ever put in your mouth. But better.

LES MISÉRABLES

Hennepin Theatre Trust
at Orpheum Theatre
Dec. 18-30, 2018

Plunge into social turmoil in 19th century France. Victor Hugo's classic novel was transformed into one of the major musicals of the last part of the last century and almost two decades into the present one. Hear awesome tunes like *I Dreamed a Dream* and *Bring Him Home*.

hennepintheatretrust.org

THESE SHINING LIVES

Theatre in the Round Players
at Theatre in the Round
Jan. 11-Feb. 3, 2019

GLBT community playwright Melanie Marnich tells a wrenching true story of "The Radium Girls" who worked in an Illinois factory in the 1920s. They painted clock dials to glow in the dark with paint tainted with toxic radium. A memorable play written by a Minnesotan.

www.theatreintheround.org

THE GREAT LEAP

Guthrie Theater
at McGuire Proscenium Stage, Guthrie Theater
Jan. 12-Feb. 10, 2019

Playwright Lauren Yee takes us to the basketball court where teams from Beijing and California square off. Two men with dark secrets contrast a teenager with his whole life ahead of him. Shadows are cast from China's grim Cultural Revolution.

www.guthrietheater.org

THE CHILDREN

The Jungle Theater
at The Jungle Theater
Jan. 12-Feb. 10, 2019

Winner of the U.K. Writers Guild Best Play Award. Three nuclear physicists sit in a coastal cottage while outside the effects of a nuclear power plant disaster are wreaking havoc. Inspired by the 2011 Fukushima crisis.

www.jungletheater.com

A LITTLE NIGHT MUSIC

Theater Latté Da
at The Ritz Theater
Jan. 23-March 3, 2019

Stephen Sondheim's take on Ingmar Bergman's uncharacteristically comedic film, *Smiles of a Summer's Night*, won three Tony Awards including Best Musical. Surely the excellent Theater Latté Da will send in great vocals with gems like *Send in the Clowns* and *The Glamorous Life.*

www.latteda.org

THE ITALIAN STRAW HAT

Minnesota Opera
at Ordway Center for the Performing Arts
Jan. 26-Feb. 3, 2019

A horse eats a hat, hurling wedding plans into chaos! Music by cinema's penultimate composer, Nino Rota: Coppola's *The Godfather,* Zefferelli's *Romeo and Juliet*, Visconti's *The Leopard* and Fellini's *La Dolce Vita, Juliet of the Spirits,* and *Amarcord*! Ammazza!

mnopera.org

SHE LOVES ME

Artistry at Bloomington Theatre and Art Center
at The Schneider Theater
Jan. 26–Feb. 17, 2019

Before Joe Masteroff wrote the script for *Cabaret* and Jerry Bock and Sheldon Harnick gave us *Fiddler on the Roof,* they co-created *She Loves Me.* Workplace rivalries play out on the surface. But beneath that rumbles romantic yearnings.

artistrymn.org

ANTIGONE

Park Square Theatre
at Andy Boss Thrust Stage, Park Square Theatre
Feb. 1-March 3, 2019

One of the landmark works of the Golden Age of Greek drama. The story of a young woman who risks all for her brother's burial looms as the emblem of heroic moral courage. When the king clamps down, her doom seems inevitable.

parksquaretheatre.org

FLOWERS FOR THE ROOM

Yellow Tree Theatre
at Yellow Tree Theatre
Feb. 1-March 3, 2019

Jessica Lind Peterson is one of the best musical actresses around. Her *Next to Normal* performance was sublime. Also a playwright, her script for *Flowers in the Room* relates how a serious injury impacts a marriage. Yellow Tree is building a reputation for strong musical theater.

yellowtreetheatre.com

ROCK OF AGES

Hennepin Theatre Trust
at Orpheum Theatre
Feb. 8-10, 2019

A thrilling jukebox musical sparked by glam metal lightning. The Big '80s erupts in the 10th Anniversary tour with music from bands like Styx, Poison, Twisted Sister, and Whitesnake. And the sounds of Bon Jovi and Pat Benatar. It was fun on film but on stage it's visceral.

hennepintheatretrust.org

AS YOU LIKE IT

Guthrie Theater
at Wurtele Thrust Stage, Guthrie Theater
Feb. 9-March 17, 2019

In William Shakespeare's crossgender comedy classic, young and brilliant Rosalind disguises herself as a boy after being exiled from the Kingdom. In the forest of Arden she meets true blue Orlando, Shakespeare's ideal of young manhood. You'll hear the legendary "Seven Ages of Man" passage.

www.guthrietheater.org

BENEVOLENCE

Penumbra Theatre Company
at Penumbra Theatre
Feb. 14-24, 2019

The 1955 lynching of 14-year-old person of color Emmett Till was triggered by white woman Carolyn Bryant's fabricated tale of sexual and verbal assault. Sparking international outrage, it galvanized the civil rights movement. The second play in Ifa Bayeza's trilogy about his murder's impact.

penumbratheatre.org

THE GOVERNMENT INSPECTOR

Theatre in the Round Players
at Theatre in the Round
Feb. 15-March 10, 2019

Minnesota's widely produced playwright, Jeffrey Hatcher, is rooted in classic drama. His adaptation of Nikolai Gogol's 1836 satire, one of world theater's great comedy of errors and mistaken identities, exposes a town's web of corruption. It reminds us that politics are local too, not just national.

www.theatreintheround.org

A BRONX TALE – THE NEW MUSICAL

Hennepin Theatre Trust
at Orpheum Theatre
Feb. 19-24, 2019

Film legend Robert De Niro and Broadway legend Jerry Zaks co-directed the musical version of the beloved movie. A coming-of-age story where the grisly world of organized crime competes with the world of diligence and honest work.

hennepintheatretrust.org

THE LINCOLN CENTER THEATER PRODUCTION OF FALSETTOS

Ordway
at Ordway Center for the Performing Arts
Feb. 19-24, 2019

Being Jewish and gay are vibrantly portrayed in this contemporary classic. Marvin left his wife and now has a male lover, a shrink, and a 10-year-old son worried he'll turn out gay. Thank God for the lesbian neighbors!

ordway.org

IPHIGENIA AND OTHER DAUGHTERS

Theatre Unbound
at Gremlin Theatre, St. Paul
Feb. 23-March 10, 2019

The celebrated feminist theater group transports us to ancient times with archetypal figures, such as the children of Agamemnon and Clytemnestra. Beware the cycles of family violence! Resonating with our current day, playwright Ellen McLaughlin re-imagines the vengeful legacy of the bloody House of Atreus.

www.theatreunbound.com ■

HUMP! In All Shapes, Sizes, and Sexualities

BY KASSIDY TARALA

Dan Savage's 13th Annual HUMP! Film Festival comes to Minneapolis Sept. 13-15.

Everybody's sexy. That's what Dan Savage's HUMP! Film Festival truly believes and represents with its 13th annual amateur porn festival. Featuring dirty movies no longer than five minutes each, HUMP! displays a wide variety of sizes, shapes, sexualities, genders, races, kinks, and more.

"You name it, you'll see it at HUMP!," says Caroline Dodge, HUMP! marketing and promotions director.

Dodge says HUMP!'s main mission is to change the way America sees, makes, and shares porn by giving everyone the opportunity to be a porn star regardless of the way they look, who they are, or what they're into.

"Our motto is that everyone is sexy! We wondered what would happen if we created a safe, fun, sex-positive place for people to express themselves on film. The results are in: we've gone from a few shows in Seattle to over 30 cities in the United States and Canada! People want to laugh, squirm, be challenged, and most importantly, be turned on, by all different kinds of sex! Not just mainstream porn," she says.

Any and all submissions are welcome, Dodge says. The only requirements are "no poop, animals, children, or MAGA hats."

"We have seen pretty much everything! We are always hoping for more representation from people of color, women, and LGBTQ communities," Dodge says.

The HUMP! Film Festival celebrates sexuality in all shapes, sizes, colors and orientations.
Photo courtesy of Caroline Dodge

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MARTINPATRICK3

PHOTO Travis Anderson Photo

Video submissions running up to five minutes are eligible for the HUMP! Film Festival. Photo by Nicolle Clemetson

A problem in mainstream porn is the vast underrepresentation of diversity, especially in sexuality. Dodge says the majority of mainstream porn tends to be "straight, straight, straight," so it's important to have a festival like HUMP! to represent the wide variety of sexualities.

"Some of our audience are seeing LGBTQ sex for the first time! Lesbians watch gay men have sex. Gay men watch straight women have sex. Straight men watch gay men have sex. And everything in between! It's very educational, and it normalizes taboos that mainstream culture has been selling us forever," she says.

One of the highlights of the HUMP! festival is that each film is required to be five minutes or less, which means that if an audience member doesn't like one of the films, it won't be too long until the next one.

"If you don't like something, hang tight—the next one will be for you! Films are five minutes max, and the show is 90 minutes," Dodge says. "We squeeze as much variety as we possibly can into one show! Expect to turn off your cell phone and lose yourself in a world of every kind of sexuality—art films, animations, comedies, iPhone home movies—it's all there for you to enjoy!"

Because HUMP! offers a variety of films featuring an extremely diverse group of people, Dodge says it really offers something for everyone who is interested in celebrating sexual expression and diversity.

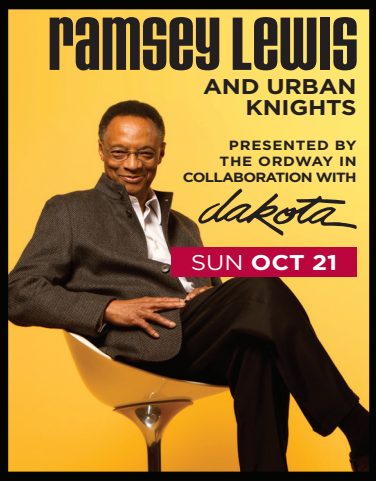
"This festival is for anyone who wants to celebrate creative sexual expression. You will laugh, you will gasp, you may even cover your eyes a few times! But I can safely say you will never see anything quite like HUMP! It is a total blast," Dodge says.

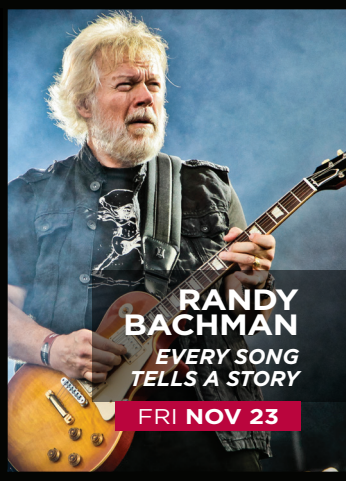
If you're interested in learning more about Dan Savage's 13th Annual HUMP! Film Festival, visit their website at humpfilmfest.com for more information, tickets to the festival, or to submit your own short film. ■

Dan Savage's 13th annual HUMP! Film Festival will reach the Twin Cities Sept. 13-15. Photo by Nicolle Clemetson

CONCERT series

THIS FALL AT THE ORDWAY





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This activity is made possible by the voters of Minnesota through a Minnesota State Arts Board Operating Support grant, thanks to a legislative appropriation from the arts and cultural heritage fund.

Golden Valley's Golden Birthday

BY KASSIDY TARALA

Golden Valley will host its 15th annual Arts and Music Festival on Sept. 15. Photo by Luke Weisberg

The annual festival features food trucks, music, and a number of family-friendly activities. Photo by Luke Weisberg

On Sept. 15, Golden Valley will be celebrating its 15th Annual Arts and Music Festival.

If you're a fan of art, music, food trucks, parades, or just a good time, Golden Valley will be the place for you on Sept. 15. With activities for all ages, the Golden Valley Arts and Musical Festival is the perfect spot to take the family for some fun and games.

"For kids and adults, we have a parade that kicks off at 9 a.m. with people lining the parade route as early as 8 a.m.! There's also a kids' area, including a bouncy house, kids' games and crafting, antique kids 'vehicles', and kid-oriented music," says Dean Penk, Golden Valley Community Foundation Board chair.

Penk says there will also be food trucks, crafts, an "under the water tower" game area, live music, a caricature artist, and a 3D chalk art exhibition, which is great for people of all ages. Specifically for adults, there is a wide variety of food, wine, and beer, a raffle for a day and night on the town including a chauffeured limo, as well as other music, crafts, and art for sale.

"This year, the Golden Valley Arts & Music Festival will include art vendors with art for sale, music all day long, a community parade, community organization fair, a chalk art demonstration/participation experience, food trucks and beer/wine for sale, and kids' games/family art activities. We'll also be hosting a special 'Mayors vs. Kids' chess challenge with Golden Valley and Hopkins," says GVCF member Luke Weisberg.

Weisberg says any earnings and donations that exceed the costs for the festival support the GVCF's charitable work in Golden Valley.

"We also host community organizations for most of the day who share information about their work with community members throughout the festival. Finally, some of the festival's activities are run/planned by individual nonprofit organizations that serve Golden Valley," Weisberg says.

Penk says the Golden Valley Arts and Music Festival is a great opportunity for people in the community to learn more about the service that GVCF does, which helps bring the community together.

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"Currently, the focus has been on providing visibility to community groups via our Community Group Circle under the water tower. Here, attendees can walk the circle to see what service groups from the community, county, and state serve our area. The event is planned with bringing people of all sorts to gather in one place in Golden Valley, to be engaged, entertained, informed, and enlightened as to what services, arts, music and activities exist," Penk says. "This festival program is really the foundation for support for our Golden Valley Arts program. We rely on donations to support the event and all the activities the foundation supports, so the more money we raise, the more the event can expand and the foundation programs can support."

They are always looking for people to get involved, donate, or volunteer at the Golden Valley Arts and Music Festival, Weisberg says. Volunteers who help with planning the festival are essential in making sure the event runs smoothly and offers something for everyone.

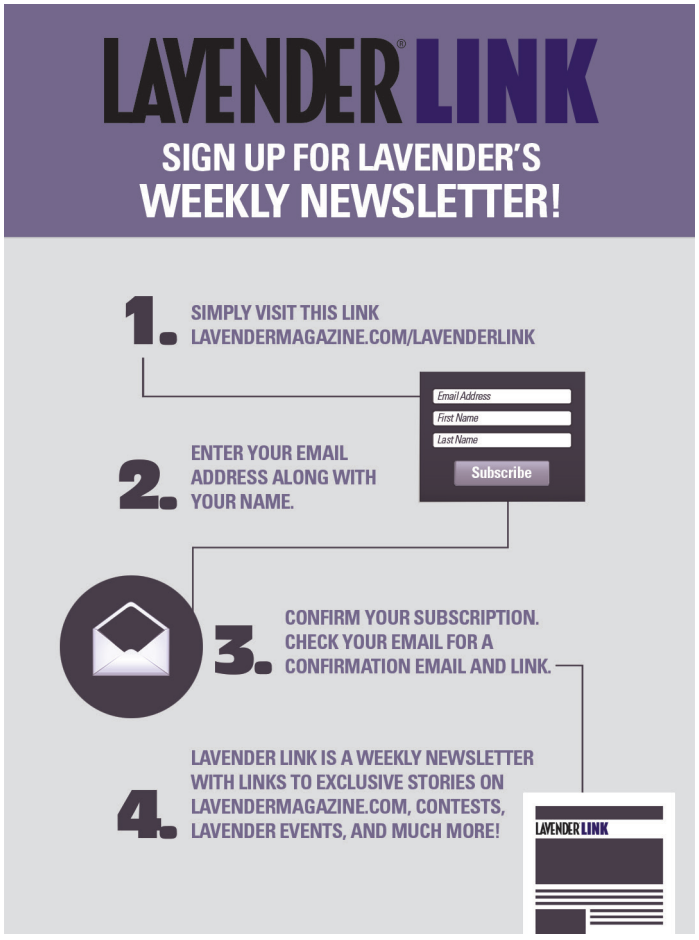
"We are a community-focused event, offering a little something for everyone. We are focused on sharing good music, art, food, drink, and community activities that create an opportunity for Golden Valley residents and others to 'Visit in the Valley' with friends and neighbors," Weisberg says.

Penk says the all-volunteer festival has between 3,500 and 4,000 people visit the festival, including well-behaved dogs each year.

"We hope that everyone from Golden Valley comes out to have a summer casual outing day and are very happy that others outside our geographic city come to take part in all we do, hopefully seeing Golden Valley as an open, welcoming community that is great to shop in, visit, or live in," Penk says.

The all-volunteer festival boasts between 3,500 and 4,000 visitors each year. Photo by Luke Weisberg

For more information about the Golden Valley Arts and Music Festival, visit their website at gvcfoundation.org/gv-arts-and-music-festival. ■



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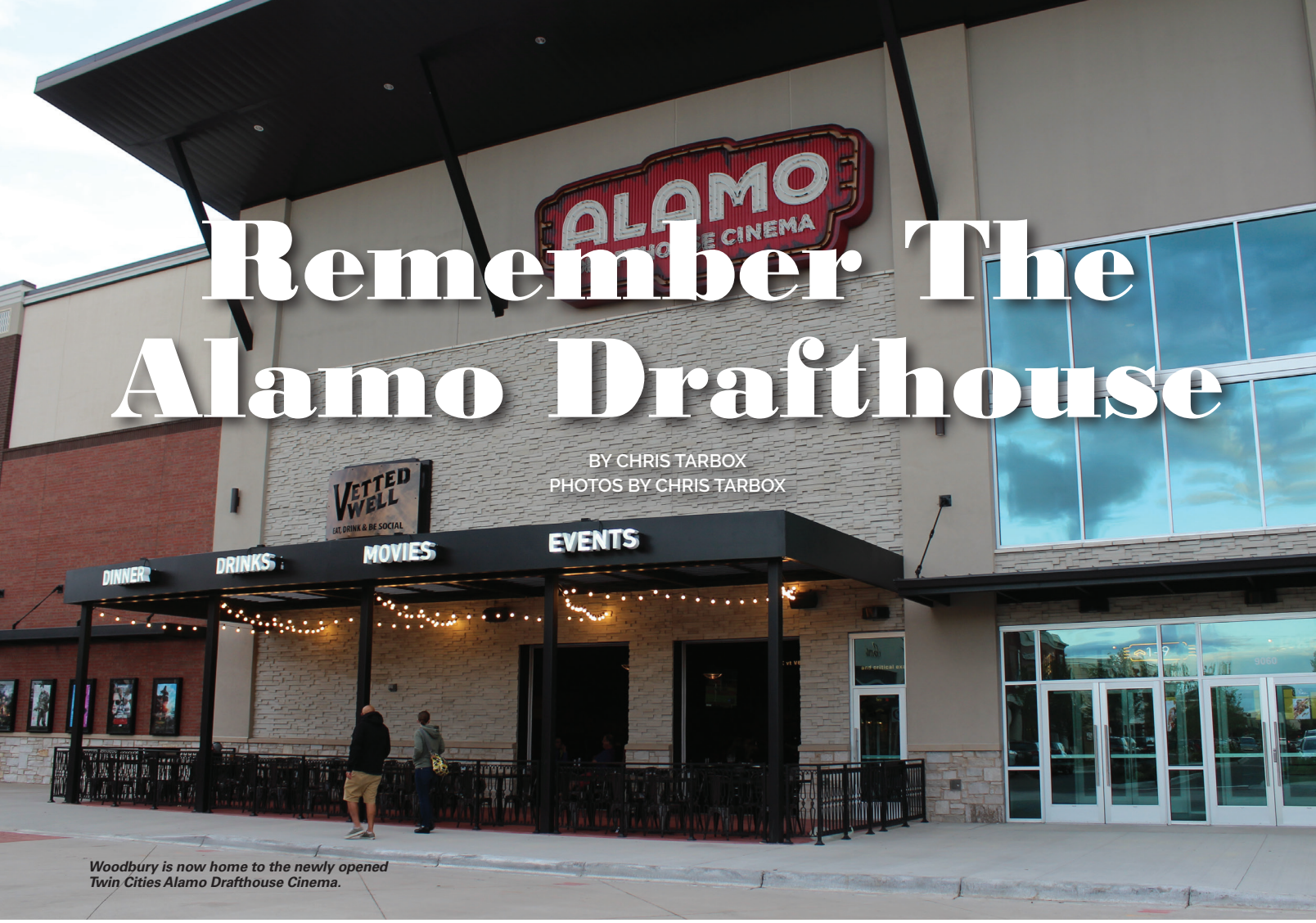
Remember The Alamo Drafthouse

BY CHRIS TARBOX
PHOTOS BY CHRIS TARBOX



Woodbury is now home to the newly opened Twin Cities Alamo Drafthouse Cinema.

As a lifelong lover of cinema, I remain steadfast in my belief that a motion picture deserves to be seen—at least at first—in the comforting confines of a movie theater. You can watch a flick on your TV, laptop, or iPad all you want, but give me a dark theater, a massive screen, and surround-sound any day. Going to a movie should be a special affair, and clearly, the famed Alamo Drafthouse agrees with me.

Twenty years after opening its first movie house in its current headquarters city of Austin, Texas, the famed Alamo Drafthouse Cinema franchise has finally opened the doors of a new location for the Twin Cities, located in the Woodbury Lakes Shopping Center in Woodbury. And according to Alamo Woodbury creative manager Tim Holly, the choice of location was a no-brainer.

The Alamo Drafthouse offers a wide variety of programming, from first-run mainstream films to arthouse indie fare.

"Whenever they go into a new market, they'll pick a suburb first and make it a destination," says Holly. "Because Woodbury's such a rapidly-growing community, they decided this was kind of a prime opportunity… and it's also kind of a destination from the east side of St. Paul and also Hudson."

While there are a number of big-name theater chains out there, the Alamo Drafthouse franchise has made a name for itself as a brash, irreverent destination for all shades of film lovers, showcasing everything from first-run mainstream films and arthouse indie flicks, to a range of repertory programming such as 1930s classics, obscure grindhouse gems, and children's programming.

On top of that, the Alamo is home to a full restaurant experience that delivers drinks and made-from-scratch meals directly to moviegoers' seats in the theater. Feeling like noshing on a sumptuous grilled cheese and a strawberry cheesecake milkshake while sitting in a comfy leather recliner and watching the latest superhero yarn or romantic comedy? Alamo's got you.

But the best and most infamous part about the Alamo Drafthouse experience is its refreshingly no-B.S. approach to talking and texting in the movie theater. The franchise made a name for itself with its movie theater etiquette policies, strictly enforcing them by giving noisy patrons the boot after a verbal warning.

"I think other theaters have that policy, but I don't think they enforce it," says Holly. "We do enforce that policy regularly. It's a little bit easier for us to enforce it because of the serving in the theaters: we have drink service running throughout the movie, so we have servers popping in and out, keeping an eye on things."

In fact, prior to my screening of the Fred Rogers documentary *Won't You Be My Neighbor?* (during which I totally did not tear up, nope, no sir, not once), Alamo played a hilarious promo video hammering its "no talking, no texting" policy straight home. And even that was just a small

Each theater in the Alamo Drafthouse offers comfy, cabaret-style recliner seating.

Every square inch of the Alamo Drafthouse is a testament to the franchise's dedication to celebrating film.

part of Alamo's excellent overall presentation. From the cabaret-style reserved seating and the infotaining pre-show programming, to the hallways lined with vintage movie posters and even the delightful touch of the wallpaper having a 35mm film design, the Woodbury Alamo is definitely something special.

The Alamo Drafthouse also hosts "Alamo For All" sensory-friendly screenings every Tuesday for shows prior to 2:05 p.m., open to all ages, including infants; the sound is turned down a touch, and patrons are allowed to talk and move about the theater.

And most importantly, the Alamo Drafthouse is a venue for movie fans, by movie fans.

"(The programming) completely varies by market. At this point, we're going to do a wide range, and we're going to mix it up as much as possible and see what people are coming out to see," says Holly. "My goal as creative manager is doing a nice, wide spread of all stuff: obscure genre stuff, to classics like Back To The Future and E.T. and Lawrence of Arabia. So we're going to be seeing what this market wants."

Seeing as how popular Alamo Drafthouse is across the country, it's not too big of a leap to assume that the Twin Cities market will want everything that the Woodbury location can throw at them. For yours truly, it's an experience worth having over and over again: excellent service, delicious food, a great atmosphere, and, of course, getting to watch movies the way they're meant to be watched.

"We treat all the screenings the same: making them the best viewing experience possible," said Holly. ■

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LEATHER LIFE | BY STEVE LENIUS

Leather And Mentoring

Notes on a Community Conversation

Mentoring in the leather community was the subject of a panel discussion and community conversation on Sunday, Aug. 12. The event took place at eagleBOLTbar, and was preceded by brunch.

On the panel were two community members who have extensive experience in mentoring. Rod McCoy, a.k.a. Rod Onyx, holds the American Leatherman 2017 and Leatherman of Color 2011 titles. He is the co-founder of the Mid-Atlantic Chapter of ONYX, where he served first as President and later as Pledge Master. Sir Randy Ingram-Lile is the current Mr. Minneapolis Eagle, current president of the Atons of Minneapolis, and a founding board member of North Star Kennel Club.

Moderating the conversation was Ivan Nunez, International LeatherSIR 2016. The event was organized by BLUF Minneapolis, a fraternal organization of men with an interest in leather uniforms. (BLUF stands for "Breeches, Leather, Uniform Fanclub.") Several days after the event, I spoke with Nunez and Ingram-Lile about the discussion.

Rod McCoy, also known as Rod Onyx. Photo by Andrew Bertke

A mentoring relationship is one in which someone with more experience or knowledge (the mentor) guides or trains someone with less experience or knowledge (the mentee). Mentoring has been an important part of leather, on several levels, almost since the beginning of leather culture. For many years, mentoring was a way to pass important knowledge of how to do leather and kink activities—and, crucially, how to do them safely—from one generation to another.

Equally important was mentoring's social aspect. Mentors showed mentees how the leather community functioned, helped them find their place in that community, and supported them as they integrated their leather experiences into the rest of their lives. Mentoring was instrumental in developing personal character and passing community values from one generation to another.

When I talked to Ingram-Lile, he described what he experienced when he was younger and being mentored: "Back then it was much more personal. There were no classes, there was no real organization where you could go and find out about things. There was certainly no internet to look up a subject. It was more who you knew, and who they knew."

If someone wanted to learn about a topic that was not in their mentor's area of expertise, that mentor probably had a friend with the proper knowledge. Through these community connections, mentees often benefited from the knowledge and experience of several mentors. According to Ingram-Lile, "That was simply the way we did things then."

This style of mentoring was dealt a severe blow in the 1980s and 1990s when the AIDS crisis devastated the gay male community, and the leather community in particular.

AIDS interrupted the chain of mentorship by killing almost an entire generation of leathermen, who suddenly were not there to mentor the next generation and pass on their knowledge.

Today, all these years after those terrible times, the leather community is still reclaiming, rebuilding and adjusting the way it does mentoring. New types of mentoring have appeared and evolved. Mentoring in today's leather community often takes the form of group activities such as classes, seminars, demonstrations and workshops— and, increasingly in the Twin Cities, community discussions such as this one.

But, as Ingram-Lile told me, "Everything can't be taught in a class." There still are many benefits to be gained from the personal connections that come with traditional mentor/mentee relationships.

Nunez, as moderator, told me he started the conversation by asking McCoy and Ingram-Lile how they saw themselves as mentors. Ingram-Lile told me he feels he has more experience with mentoring skills and techniques while McCoy, having been Pledge Master for ONYX for many years, has more experience with direct social mentoring. But, according to Nunez, both said they saw themselves as guides in helping develop both personal character and leather/kink skills.

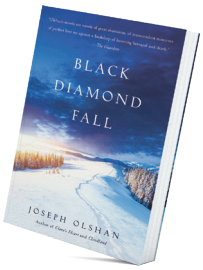
According to Nunez, the conversation also touched on the responsibilities of both mentors and mentees. Both McCoy and Ingram-Lile said they were aware that mentors are role models and that they paid attention to how they engage with the community, always showing leadership through respect. By the same token, it also is appropriate for mentees to have an attitude of respect for their mentors and other community members.

Concerning the relationship of age to mentoring, Nunez told me that during the conversation Ingram-Lile noted that skills expertise can be developed at a young age. Character development, however, more often happens over time, and better mentors tend to have that experience gained over time. On the other hand, McCoy made the point that young people can also bring fresh perspectives to mentoring, and these di?erent perspectives can help older mentors to improve their mentoring skills.

McCoy further noted that while some mentoring relationships, such as the pledging process for his club ONYX, tend to be structured, there always is an organic and fluid quality to the relationship between mentor and mentee.

Ingram-Lile told me he believes that lack of mentoring might be contributing to the rate of suicides among GLBT youth—and that more effective mentoring may be part of the solution. When connections are made through mentoring, he said, "We realize we're not alone, that there are people who have gone through [what we're going through], and they have survived. And so the next generation can also.". ■

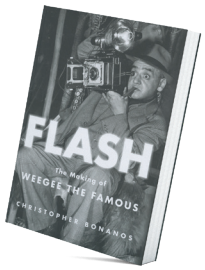
BOOKS | BY E.B. BOATNER



Black Diamond Fall

Joseph Olshan
Polis Books
$26; eBook $7.99

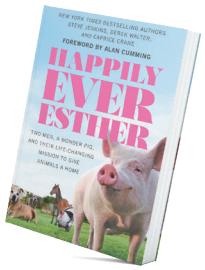
Olshan, author of Clara's Heart, combines two actual events occurring at Vermont's Middlebury College—the disappearance of a student during winter break, and the vandalizing of poet Robert Frost's nearby Homestead—to create this gripping psychological thriller and gay romance. Detectives Nick Jenkins and Helen Kennedy are brought in after student Luc Flanders vanishes after a night pond hockey game. Did he just take off, or was there foul play? He'd recently broken up with his girlfriend, but was also having a liaison with much older Sam Solomon, who, they find, has no alibi. The break-in at the Frost house seems connected, as is Sam's serious injury during an earlier skiing accident on Black Diamond Fall in Utah. All interweave into a chilling, unsettling climax.



Flash: The Making of Weegee the Famous

Christopher Bonanos
Henry Hold and Company
$32

You've probably already seen some of Weegee's (Arthur Felig's) iconic photographs– "The Critic" (1943), of two tiara'd socialites sailing by a shabby woman onlooker on opening night at New York's Metropolitan Opera; shots of tenement kids sleeping on fire escapes; rubbed-out gangsters; fatal fires. An immigrant boy from Zolochev, Ukraine, Felig (1899-1968) would become the chronicler of the night lives—and deaths—of New Yorkers. Living in one room, driving a Chevy filled with photo equipment, Weegee, as he came to be known, was usually first on the scene for any disaster. Author Bonanos, city editor at New York Magazine, sympathetically and minutely details the solitary, quixotic life of this near mythic personality. If you love New York, if you love photography, snap this up.



Happily Ever Esther: Two Men, a Wonder Pig, and Their Life-Changing Mission to give Animals a Home

Steve Jenkins, Derek Walter, and Caprice Crane
Grand Central Publishing
$27

The subtitle gives the bare bones, but barely scratches the surface of the breadth and depth of what this tenacious couple—and pig-daughter—have accomplished for abused and abandoned farm animals. Author's caveat: if you are offered a foundling mini-pig and are tempted to step up to the plate, consider five pounds may become 650 pounds, far beyond town bylaws. The logical solution, according to narrator Jenkins, was to set up a crowdfunding campaign and purchase a 50-acre farm in Campbellville, Ontario. There they created the now world-renowned Happily Ever Esther Farm Sanctuary welcoming all needy farm animals. Esther's parents speak eloquently of kindness and the vegan life, including illustrations and 23 pages of "Esther Approved" recipes. (Read also Esther the Wonder Pig, then go visit.)

In His Kiss

Neil Plakcy
Featherweight Publishing
$12.99

An intriguing coming-of-age romance with a sci-fi twist. Narrated by 17-year-old Michael Torani, he opens the novel with standard teen woes and complaints; his noisome brother, the Big Mistake; his parents (when can he leave them and boring Stewart's Crossing behind); his disturbing crush on nerdy new Cuban student, Daniel Florez. Teen hormones being what they universally are, there comes a soul kiss between the two—and a detonation somewhere deep in Michael's brain. He suddenly reads, assimilates, performs exponentially better, explains his father's work to him and discerns what might be ailing the Big Mistake. Then, Daniel's mother disappears. FBI agents, gangsters, and Cuban exiles appear. The two are on the run to Miami. YA or A, you'll be caught up in Plakcy's tale.

RIDE REVIEW | BY RANDY STERN | PHOTOS BY RANDY STERN

2019 MINI Convertible

We can safely establish that MINI is more than just the iconic two-door car that looks like the original from back in 1959.

In the past couple of years, *Lavender Magazine* brought you two variations on the MINI theme. The Clubman fused some traditional MINI aspects onto a four-door wagon. This was followed by the Countryman, MINI's answer to the premium small SUV/crossover.

This time around, *Lavender Magazine* had the chance to drive another MINI that reflects the current direction of the brand—the Convertible.

Across all three generations of the MINI family, a four-seat convertible has been a part of the lineup. This current generation just went through a mid-cycle refresh that is mild, but not without some updates on technology and cosmetic items. The Convertible reflects not just a through-line of all generations under BMW's guidance and stewardship, but a car onto its own.

The character of the Convertible starts from the two-door Hardtop model. Though some would say that the Convertible was a simple roof chop, you might be half-right. In essence, you have the guts of the Hardtop with a clever roof system.

The mid-cycle refresh brings about a new LED surround for the headlight units. The LED doubles as a turn signal, as well as a daylight running lamp. The headlamp units are now all-LED. The fog lamps were redesigned to be more integrated into the lower fascia. You will also see the revised MINI logo applied onto the exterior of each 2019 Hardtop, Convertible, and Clubman. The rear bumper skin has been redone slightly. The biggest change is the availability of the Union Jack taillights. They etched a half of the flag of the United Kingdom of Great Britain on each taillight using LED lamps to illuminate in a salute.

The lower stance has been raised by the roof itself—when the roof's up, that is. The soft canvas/cloth roof has a C-pillar blind spot that is designed more for stability. With the roof up, rearward vision is OK. Drop the roof and your lower rearward vision is blocked by the folded roof itself. Luckily, you do get infinite rear quarter vision in that position. With the roof down, you can install a wind deflector across the rear seat—that is, if you only have just yourself or another person in the Convertible.

There is a third way to work the roof. You can have the front half of the roof folded back for a sunroof effect. All roof operations are available from one switch. It takes 18 seconds to get the roof down. You also have the option to keep the windows up or down when the roof is lowered.

If you remove the wind deflector, you get seating for four. Depending on the size of the people, you may have to consider the MINI Convertible a 2+2. But, if you do have someone in the rear seat, the MINI Convertible should be a fun way to get through summer. Front seats are supportive with plenty of manual adjustments for rake, recline and height. One lever on the top of the seatback takes care of rear seat access.

Cargo space starts at 5.7 cubic feet with the roof down. Putting up the roof will expand that space to 7.6 cubic feet. The trunk is hinged at the bottom, yet it opens quite big to fit luggage inside. It is also expandable by dropping the rear seatbacks for longer items—or, more luggage.

If you are familiar with the current MINI lineup, then you will be familiar with the dashboard layout. The steering column both tilts and telescopes with the instrument binnacle attached to the top of it. A Head-Up Display helps to keep your eyes on the road with the right amount of information ahead.

The large center dial houses the MINI Connected infotainment system. For 2019, MINI added Apple CarPlay connectivity to the system. Our tester had accessibility to apps, along with a navigation system. Harmon Kardon provided the speakers throughout the cabin, which provided great sound with the roof up and down. The audio and infotainment upgrade on our tester is part of one of the top equipment package you can get on a MINI Convertible, called Iconic. It offers practically everything you would like in a car in one extensive bundle of features. Other equipment levels are Classic and Signature—all leading to the top Iconic level.

The MINI Convertible is available in three performance options. Our tester was the Cooper S, powered by a 2.0-liter turbocharged four-cylinder engine. With 189 horsepower on tap, the engine feels like a perfect fit for the Convertible with a superb powerband devoid of turbo lag and superb response. You can credit that response to the 207 pound-feet of torque, giving the Cooper S Convertible a more robust low end. Fuel economy for the MINI Convertible Cooper S is rated at 25 MPG in the city, 33 MPG on the highway.

You can get the Convertible in a Cooper model with a 134-horsepower turbocharged three-cylinder engine, or the uprated John Cooper Works model, which raises the Cooper S engine up to 228 horsepower. All three models offer a choice of a six-speed manual or a six-speed automatic. Our tester had the latter—and it also fits the Cooper S engine perfectly with a great response through the gears. All Convertibles come with front-wheel drive.

As a side note, I was at the regional media association's annual spring confab at Road America in Elkhart Lake, Wisconsin. There, I had the chance to run a 2018 MINI John Cooper Works 2-door Hardtop on the karting course for the autocross event. I cannot put into words how the JCW drove: it's that good! In fact, I had my best autocross course times in the JCW. Something to consider if presented with MINI's high-performance trim level.

Speaking of driving dynamics, the MINI Convertible certainly feels like it's Hardtop's brother. Handling is superb with sharp reflexes and flat cornering. Both are enhanced through the Convertible's drive modes. Flip the toggle up into Sport and things get more aggressive. In any setting, the ride is firm. There is some compliance, but that goes away in Sport mode.

The steering system is also superb. Sharpness is felt at every turn. It is really a point-and-shoot system. Steering feel is tight—heavier in Sport mode. On center feel is superb. The brakes are also fantastic, offering excellent feel at the pedal and response down to the calipers. We experienced great stops in normal conditions. We were unable to do any panic stops in our testing.

One thing you will notice is how stable the Convertible's structure is. Most convertibles would have to compensate for the body/chassis reward from the door/B-pillar. The MINI's structure is very compact, but built for rigidity from the door, up the B-pillar and onward to the roof itself. The C-pillar of the roof is thick, therefore assisting to stabilize the rear end of the car. When you do take the curves, the Convertible does not flex or shake.

Another thing to point out about the MINI Convertible's roof is the way it handles inclement weather. The roof's construction is made not to only to keep everyone dry with its up—it also works well to deaden the sound from outside.

The MINI Convertible starts at $26,900 for a Cooper Classic model with a manual transmission. Our Cooper S Iconic tester came with a sticker price of $40,355.

The one thing to understand about the MINI Convertible is that one should not worry about the lack of reward vision or practicality. You buy a convertible for the intent of just having fun on the road. It is meant to go on outings up to the North Shore or home to see the family. Or, to get it ready for next year's Pride festivities.

Though the core of the MINI lineup is the two-door Hardtop, one should not ignore the Convertible as a viable choice. It has everything you want in the two-door Hardtop: with a three-way roof that opens up to the skies. You can also get a MINI Convertible with any of the three power choices and equipment levels. The Convertible is simply an original idea that makes MINI what it is: built for maximum fun. ■

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OUR VOICES

SKIRTING THE ISSUES | BY ELLEN KRUG

Magic Number

Warning: you'll probably want to file this under "TMI."

I'm going to talk about sex, or more precisely, my lack of it. Woe is me.

Several years ago, I met a vibrant young woman—I'll call her "K"—who was in her early twenties; over drinks one night with several other women (including me), she talked about her "magic number." Before that, I had no idea what "magic number" meant but I quickly realized it was a tally of the men with whom she'd had sex.

With a half-empty wine glass in hand, K announced, "I think my magic number is twenty-two," only to pause with a scrunch. "Wait a minute," she added, "It might actually be twenty-three."

Sensing that the askew looks of several at the table might indicate negative judgment, K quickly followed-up with, "Do you think that's bad? Is that too many?"

"No, not at all," I replied. Actually, I was thinking, *Wow, that's a hell of a lot of guys.*

In case you're curious, a recent survey of sexually active adults indicates they generally accept that "ten" is the best possible magic number for their long-term partner—it's apparently not too many (to weed out the prolific) or too few (no one wants a total novice).

Now, let's shift to moi, whose magic number is quite dismal.

The backstory: for most of my life, I presented as male and ostensibly attracted only to women. Indeed, I began dating my eventual wife, Lydia, in high school and within a year or so, things had progressed to "home base" (hey, back then you didn't rush into sex and it didn't help that she was Missouri Synod Lutheran).

Even though I had been secretly dressing in my sister's underwear since I was eleven (a fact I'm not proud of but it's the truth), I had thought that fantasies about being a girl would go away once I started having sex. In fact, they did disappear only to show up again several months down the road.

When the fantasies returned, they were more intense than ever; only now, they were accompanied by something new: the idea of having sex with the high school football team offensive tackle.

I thought all of this would evaporate as life took its course with law school, marriage to Lydia, children and a demanding civil trial practice.

But the fantasies never did go away. I couldn't get out of my head the idea of a man adoring me as a woman while I stood before him wearing pretty white cotton bikini panties.

Like I warned, TMI.

Fast forward to today.

What I had fantasized about is now real—I finally have the body of a woman and scores of delightful white cotton bikini panties. The only thing missing is a man to adore me.

To date—nearly eight years after my gender confirmation surgery—I've racked up a magic number of exactly two and a half. (If you ever see me on the street, feel free to ask about the "half.")

I'm not at all happy about my magic number. Yet, at my age (61), there's not a whole lot I can do about adding to it.

As I've written before, neither Match.com or Plenty of Fish seems to work at all for me (or other transgender humans). Until recently, Craigslist made it easy to connect with men who are accepting of transgender women, but now that's gone due to government regulation.

Which leaves Tinder. What a crapshoot there.

It's also not that I haven't met men; indeed, I have. The problem is that notwithstanding the ever-present goal to up my magic number, I'm also quite picky. I have this silly notion that if I'm going to sleep with someone, they need to be relatively smart, fairly good looking, and able to make me laugh.

I know, call me a hopeless romantic. And, also totally and utterly naïve.

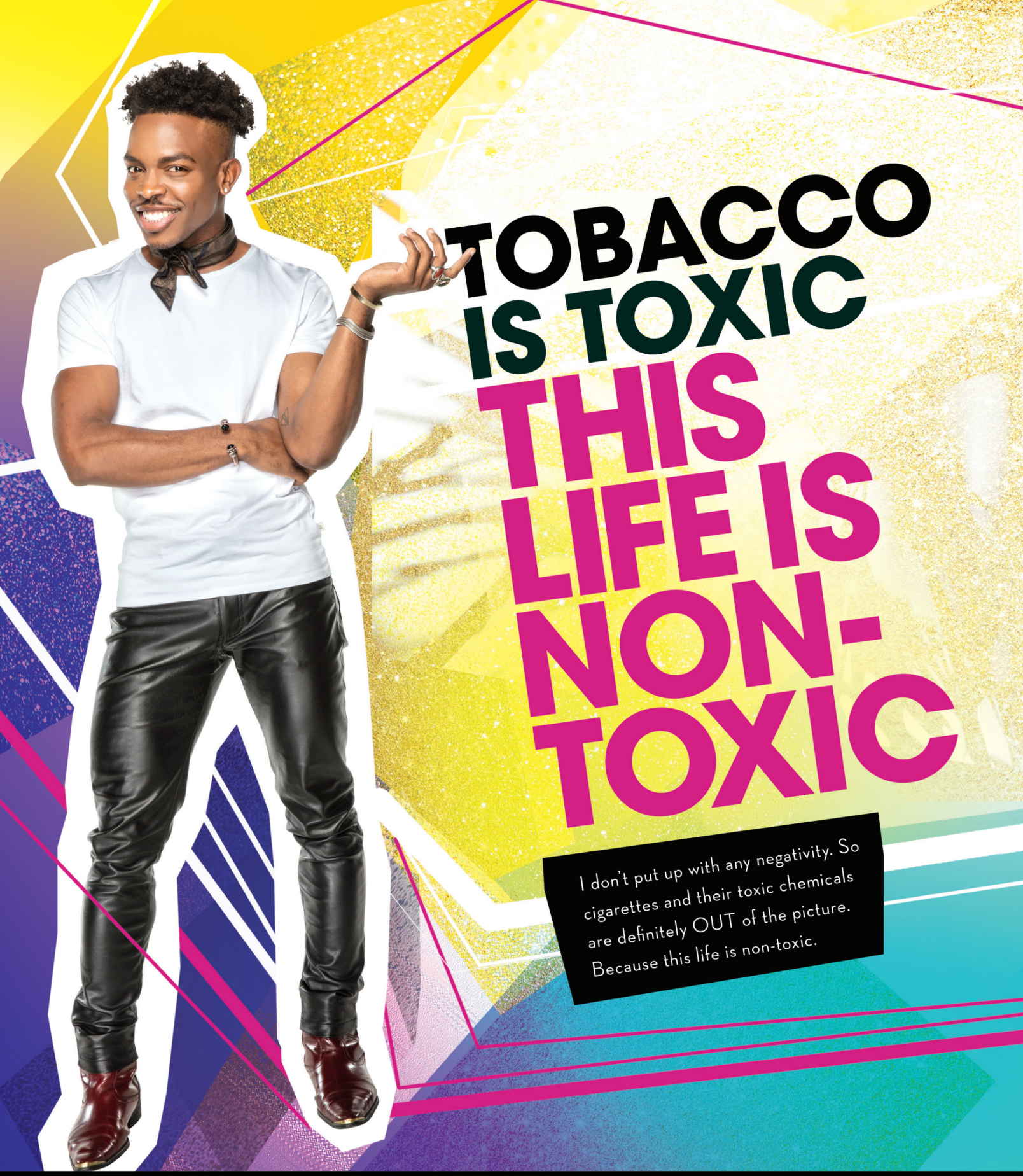
There's another problem in that I don't "pass" as female 100 percent due to my still way-too-masculine voice—for some men, this is a real dealbreaker. It's just one more obstacle in adding to my magic number.

On top of all of this is my outright envy, even jealousy, over the many genetic females and way younger trans women who have their relative picks of men and ease of adding to their magic numbers. It certainly doesn't seem fair at all. I worked so hard my entire life to get here, to the real me, and there's no one to enjoy me with.

Yet, as I know, that's the way life is—unfair, even arbitrary.

Still, I have absolutely no regrets. Besides, I really love wearing white cotton bikini panties even if there's no one to see me in them. ■

Ellen (Ellie) Krug is the author of Getting to Ellen: A Memoir about Love, Honesty and Gender Change *(2013). She speaks and trains on diversity and inclusion topics; visit www.elliekrug.com where you can also sign up for her newsletter, The Ripple. She welcomes your comments at ellenkrugwriter@gmail.com.*



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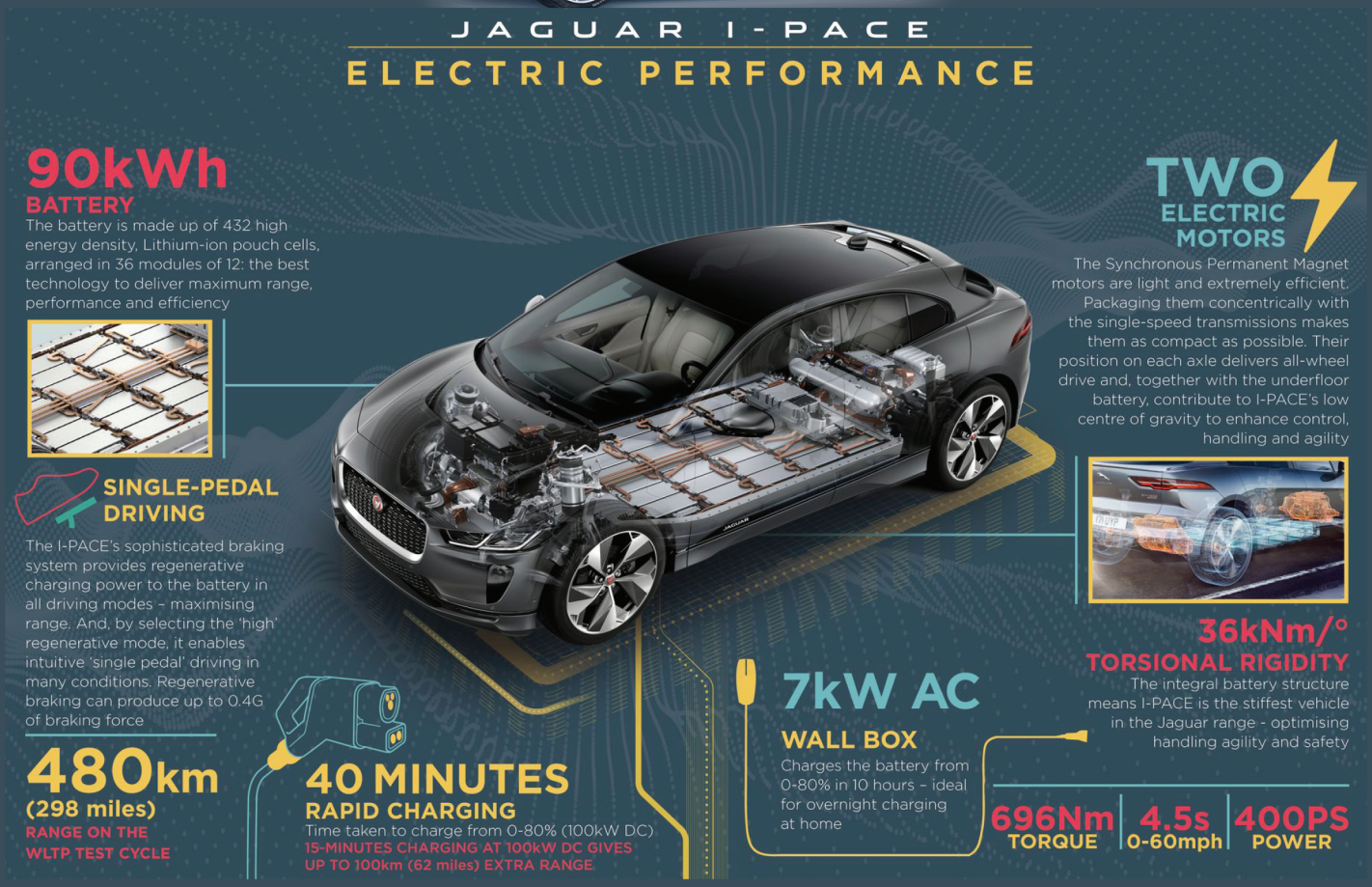

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